1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

to the monastery. But to eat an animal so killed wittingly is a sin without remedy and which will be heavily visited in the next reincarnation.

Lamas naturally cannot kill animals nor should they eat them on the same day that they have been killed; these prohibitions, however, do not extend to the lay members of the lama's family. In a house where there are no laymen lamas will call one in to act as a butcher for them; the butcher will get as fee twelve to fourteen lbs. of meat from the crutch of an ox, smaller but similar amounts from a goat or pig, and a drink of *chi* for a chicken. Cattle are usually killed with a bow and arrow, shooting from very near; sometimes they are stoned or killed with a pointed knife. Pigs and goats are killed with a pointed knife if there is one, otherwise with a piece of sharpened bamboo. Chickens are usually knocked on the head. Boys above the age of ten can kill chickens and goats, and pigs after fifteen; but only a completely potent person will have the courage to kill an ox.

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With small exceptions the land and animals are considered to be the property of the householder, in whose name the house is registered and who is responsible for the payment of taxes. This householder is usually the oldest man in the prime of life in the family; a grandfather who has living sons usually gives the control in his life time over to his eldest son. In theory the property descends from elder to younger brother, and then, when all of the first generation are dead or too old, to the sons of the elder brother. In point of fact it is seldom that there is more than one family of each generation in one household; if the group becomes over-large the sons usually set up house on their own. If a son wishes to set up on his own during his father's life time, the father assigns to him, with the consent and co-operation of the Mandal and *youmi*[9] his proportionate share of the land. If when the father is dead the sons wish to separate the property is divided by the Mandal, *youmi*, and *gyapōn*. The house is given to the eldest son, the animals and movable property divided up equally; the land is also divided up equally, the eldest son having the first choice and, if there is difference in the size of the fields, the biggest fields. In the event of the number of fields not being exactly divisible by the number

[9] *Youmi* and *gyapōn* are village officials: for further explanation see Chapter Five, p. 131.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of sons the biggest fields will be split in two. Should two or more brothers wish to continue to live together they will be given adjoining fields. In recent years there has only been one such division; Ongden and his two brothers separated during their father's life-time.

An example of the working of the joint family can be given from Tafoor's household. This, the biggest in the village, consists of fifteen people: the second Dorjé Lapoon, the elder brother of the Muktair, Tafoor's dead father, and his newly-married wife Pumri who was formerly his aunt: Tafoor, his wife and four children; Chudo, Tafoor's younger brother, with his wife and three children; Prumtu, a fifteen-year-old half-sister of Tafoor; and a distantly related celibate lama. The whole household work together on the temporary fields, of which only one of each sort is cleared each year. Beyond a few animals, the second Dorjé Lapoon and his wife own no property; it would not be seemly for him to do so as a revered Dorjé Lapoon. Tafoor and Chudo have separate rice and cardamum fields and animals; but the produce, though kept separate, is taken in approximately equal quantities for household consumption. They share in the payment of the taxes and the liquidation of the debt left by their dead father; the rest of the cardamum money each spends as he thinks fit. Though there is only six years difference in their age they act and appear as if they were of different generations; Tafoor is notably serious and responsible, Chudo rather childish and always joking. The second Dorjé Lapoon and his wife are treated as honoured guests and have no responsibilities; Mrs. Tafoor fills the rôle of 'housemother', saving the sowing seed and giving out the stores to be cooked, Mrs. Chudo that of 'youngest daughter-in-law', doing the cooking and making herself useful.

Land can only be owned by men; in the event of a woman or group of women being left sole possessors of a property they must acquire, either by marriage or adoption, a male who can inherit the property. Some childless couples adopt a son (*kup-tsop*—literally a substitute child) to look after them in their old age and to be their heir. In nearly all cases such adopted sons are the children of near relations.[10] Should a person die without heirs or should the heirs be too young to work the property a *ké-tsop* (a word formed on the analogy of *kup-tsop*, a substitute tax-payer) will

[10] Further details about adoption will be found in Chapter VI, p. 177.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 10

CHILDREN

LEPCHAS are patrilineal and, in common with most of the people of India who trace descent from the father, live under what is known as the joint-family system. Under this system the family remains more or less intact, since it is only the girls who leave their parental home on marriage. There are occasions, of course, when brothers decide to separate, but, generally speaking, the land remains undivided and is worked by the members of the family as a whole.

"A child born into a community divided into clans," notes Rivers,* "becomes a member of a domestic group other than the family in the strict sense; and this is reflected in the terms of kinship that he addresses to those around him. The system of relationship found in these circumstances is called classificatory because whole groups of relatives are classed with the father, mother, brother, sister, and so forth, and receive the same terms of address. That is to say, relatives are grouped in classes. Thus, a person will give to a large number of men the term which he applies to his own father; to a large class of women he gives the same name as that he uses for his mother; and this applies even to the relationship of husband and wife. Thus, the distinctions of uncle, aunt, and cousin that play so fundamental a part in our system of relationship are largely obliterated in communities with moieties and clans."

The Lepchas use a very simple form of classificatory relationship, in which, however, the biological father and mother are clearly distinguished. It would be of no interest to the general reader to burden this account with a list of the words in use to denote the various relationships; but one

* *Social Organisation.* W. H. R. Rivers. London, 1926.